

Michigan's Campaign to End Homelessness Housing Initiatives

Housing First Initiative

Addendum E

2008-2009

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

Background:

Housing First is an approach to ending homelessness that centers on providing people who are homeless with housing quickly and then offering services as needed. What differentiates Housing First from more traditional responses to homelessness (i.e. emergency shelter or transitional housing) is that it is “housing-based,” with an immediate and primary focus on helping individuals and families to quickly access and sustain permanent housing. This approach has the benefit of being consistent with what most people experiencing homelessness need and seeks help to achieve. Housing First programs share critical elements:

- There is a focus on helping individuals and families access and sustain permanent rental housing as quickly as possible and the housing is not time-limited;
- A variety of services are delivered primarily following a housing placement to promote housing stability and individual well-being;
- Such services are time-limited or long-term depending upon individual need; and
- Housing is not contingent on compliance with services – instead, participants must comply with a standard lease agreement and are provided with the services and supports that are necessary to help them do so successfully.

While all Housing First programs share these critical elements, program models vary significantly depending upon the population served. For people who have experienced chronic homelessness, there is an expectation that intensive (and often specialized) services will be needed indefinitely. However, the vast majority of homeless individuals and families do not experience chronic homelessness. Most often they have experienced a housing or personal crisis that led them to seek help from the homeless shelter system and require less intensive services.

Project Overview:

To help communities embrace Housing First the Michigan State Housing Development Authority (MSHDA) has allocated \$1 million dollars (\$1,000,000) for the Housing First Initiative. It is MSHDA's intent to expand the efforts of this initiative to every region of the state.

The Housing First Initiative is targeted to the creation and implementation of Housing First models that address the housing and service needs of Michigan's homeless. Through this initiative MSHDA hopes to build upon the strength of existing local partnerships in order to create housing first models that can be emulated in other regions of Michigan and across the nation.

All models must identify how the newly adopted Housing First practice will work together to not only quickly house the homeless but how the practices will begin to reduce the costs to shelters and/or motel night stays in the community. Since this is a non-renewable grant, applicants must identify how their Housing First activity/strategy will be continued in future years.

Expected Outcomes:

- Align with and support local 10-Year Plans to End Homelessness;
- Create local models of Housing First for individuals who are experiencing homelessness that can be replicated in other regions of the state and across the nation;
- Reduce the duration of time homeless individuals remain in the emergency shelter system;
- Reduce expenses incurred by shelters;
- Decrease the time required to assist homeless individuals in securing mainstream services, entitlement benefits, and opportunities for increased income;
- Increase the numbers of homeless individuals who exit the shelter system with positive housing outcomes, i.e. 75% provided with Housing First do not re-lapse into homelessness.
- Decrease measurable net costs of homelessness for public systems (over time), e.g. hospitals, police intervention;
- Develop and implement strategies that rapidly move homeless individuals from shelters and streets into permanent housing;
- Enhance collaboration between local units of government, Continuum of Care (CoC) bodies, Community Collaborative service providers, local businesses, and local philanthropic entities;
- Create and support local Interagency Service Teams;
- Create linkages between local, state and federal funding streams to ensure both on-going and increased resources for Housing First projects for individuals who have experienced homelessness;
- Build capacity and develop technical skills among key stakeholders to create and/or replicate Housing First models for future projects.

Use of Funds:

For this initiative MSHDA has committed \$1 million dollars (\$1,000,000) and communities can request **up to \$125,000. Applicants are encouraged to be creative in developing Housing First models/strategies for their regions.** Since every community has unique characteristics, grantees are encouraged to create Housing First models that use a variety of proven strategies such as the following examples:

I. Housing Resource Center

This initiative will provide comprehensive housing placement and related services to people who are homeless and have special needs in communities. Housing Resource Centers (HRC) are designed as a “One stop shop” for housing needs. The HRC can also serve as the Lead Agency for the Homeless Assistance Recovery Program (HARP) – administering homeless preference Housing Choice Vouchers for the area (upon approved by MSHDA). Ultimately, the HRC builds relationships between homeless and/or special needs tenants, service agencies and housing providers.

The goal of the HRC is: to directly engage landlords, property managers and service agencies to quickly and effectively house homeless individuals and/or families; establish a list of local landlords and property managers and existing units that meet HUD Housing Quality Standards (HQS); assist in connecting homeless individuals/families with rental assistance, affordable housing, and to assist in negotiating leases; assist tenants receiving *temporary* rental assistance to either attain self-sufficiency or obtain *permanent* rental subsidy; develop eviction prevention and crisis response plans to increase housing stability, i.e., avoid re-lapsing into homelessness; to refer the homeless to needed services and help them obtain entitlement benefits, employment opportunities, and needed household items, e.g. bedding and linens.

II. Housing Coordinator

A Housing Coordinator embraces the housing first methodology and works to rapidly move the homeless into housing, thereby reducing the length of homelessness. The Coordinator bridges the gap between homelessness and housing by assessing the household's needs, referring household's to needed federal, state and local programs, meanwhile assuring throughout this "clearinghouse" time period that the number of nights the household is homeless is as minimal as possible.

Activities of a Housing Coordinator may include: providing *outreach* and engagement designed to reduce barriers and encourage homeless people to enter appropriate housing linked with appropriate services, assisting homeless in *obtaining* safe, decent, and sanitary *housing* and *maintaining* the *housing*, developing *relationships with landlords*, and once the households are rehoused, facilitating linkages to mainstream programs (TANF, SSI, FS) and services, i.e., acting as a referral center to link the homeless to services, providing other needed supports, such as assistance in acquiring household items such as beds and linens, etc.

Outreach

- Actively collaborate with other local and regional human service agencies identifying homeless persons in need of housing assistance.
- Maintain regular and ongoing contact with emergency and domestic violence shelters, transitional housing programs and other area service providers
- Establish regular hours for outreach at partnering local agencies and shelters serving homeless populations.
- Develop strategies for identifying and engaging families with children, and youth in rural areas.

Housing Assistance

- Provide direct assistance in locating and securing safe, decent, affordable housing.
- Identify and assist in obtaining first month's rent, security deposit, and other move-in expenses as necessary.
- Develop and maintain an updated and comprehensive listing of housing options and resources for homeless populations.
- Work with supportive services staff in homeless shelters, transitional housing, and other homeless services programs to facilitate their efforts in helping homeless participants to obtain and remain in safe, decent, affordable, housing.
- Collaborate with case managers from other local/regional homeless service providers in helping to respond to other housing-related needs of homeless households.
- Manage processing of transitional housing leasing assistance payments for eligible households (in partnership with other local homeless programs).

Consumer Needs Assessment/Supportive Services

- Work with homeless households to identify potential eligibility for mainstream resource benefits (e.g. TANF, VA, SSI, FS, CDC, Medicaid, WIC, MI-Child, etc.) and assist in program enrollment.
- Obtain employment.
- Obtain mainstream resources and services.
- Assist in expediting entitlement benefit determinations and processing.
- Determine readiness for independent living and services needed to support self-sufficiency – including substance abuse, mental health and medical treatment.

- Assist in determination of eligibility and readiness for employment, training or education programs.
- Collaborate with case managers from other local/regional homeless service providers in helping to obtain and maintain access to mainstream services.
- Develop a list of payees and link tenants to an agency that acts as a designated payee. (What is a payee? A payee is an individual organization who can manage or direct someone else to manage the tenant's money. The main responsibility as a payee is to use the funds to pay for the current and foreseeable needs of the beneficiary and properly save any funds not needed to meet current needs. Payee's also keep accurate records of how the beneficiary's money is used.)

Housing Coordination for Otherwise Un-served Homeless Households

- Assist homeless families who are not otherwise affiliated with a local/regional homeless services provider in determining their needs, strengths and resources therefore increasing income and self-determination.
- Establish a case plan with hard-to-serve homeless households to help address these household's needs and promote ties to the community.
- Identify needed services such as education/training, job placement, or treatment services, and assist with appropriate referrals.
- Assist in providing support for stabilizing hard-to-serve homeless households in their new homes for up to six months following re-location.

Transportation Assistance

- Assist participants in obtaining transportation to locate housing, to move into housing, and provide other transportation assistance on an as-needed basis.

Assistance with Household Items

- Assist participants in locating and securing furniture and household goods as needed.

Follow-Up Support

- Provide additional follow-up support, as needed, for up to six months after homeless participants obtain permanent housing.
- Assess housing status of program participants at three, six, and twelve months following placement in permanent housing.

Records-Keeping

- Participate in data-entry for all contacts in the Michigan Statewide Homeless Management Information System (MSHMIS).
- Assure timely and complete reports as required by the HUD, MSHDA, and DHS.

III. Chicago Model

The Chicago Model for Housing First consists of the conversion of transitional (1-2 year programs) to either 120 day-Interim Housing, or permanent housing. Housing First funding can be used to provide a shallow subsidy, up to 120 days of rent, for the purpose of rapidly re-housing homeless individuals.

This model of Housing First must be used in conjunction with homeless individuals on a waiting list for Tenant Based Rental Assistance (TBRA) or the Homeless Assistance Recovery Program (HARP). The rental subsidy can be used to rapidly re-house homeless individuals until they become stabilized on their own or receive a housing subsidy.

Definitions:

The intent of this initiative is to target homeless individuals and families with incomes at or below 30 percent Area Median Income or 100 percent of the poverty level and facing long-term barriers to gaining economic resources for stable, safe and quality permanent housing.

Housing First - Methodology premised on the belief that vulnerable and at-risk homeless individual are more responsive to interventions and social services support after they are in their own housing, rather than while living in temporary/transitional facilities or housing programs. Rapid re-housing facilitates the move into permanent housing for homeless individuals and families and seeks to engage them in a voluntary progressive set of individual/family case management activities and a person centered/family centered planning process that moves them toward improved social and economic well being.

Interagency Service Team (IST) - A team of representatives from human service agencies that serve the low-income population in their community. This team should consist of representatives from the key stakeholders within the community including:

- Department of Human Services
- Community Mental Health Provider
- Michigan Works! Agency
- Emergency and/or Domestic Violence Shelter Provider

Communities that have special programs that serve homeless populations should also where possible, include representatives from the following organizations as part of the IST:

- Hospital Administrators
- Local Police or Sheriff's Department
- Housing Resource Specialists
- Veterans Affairs
- Homeless Youth Programs
- Michigan Prisoner Re-Entry Initiative
- School District Homeless Liaison/School representative
- Community Action Agencies
- Substance Abuse Agencies

It is recommended that a single IST be created that encompasses all initiatives. If your community already has an existing IST, membership should be broadened to include the representation necessary for all of the initiatives. The IST should minimally meet quarterly.

Project Lead Agency - This agency assumes the responsibility of project management and coordination, and is the fiduciary for the funding.

Domestic Violence Service Provider Agency - Provides comprehensive domestic violence services to survivors and/or engages in comprehensive social change to end domestic violence and/or sexual violence as their primary purpose; and operates its principal place of business in the state of Michigan.

Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) - A MOU must be created between identified supportive service agencies and other key stakeholders that clearly define the relationship between all parties.

Michigan Statewide Homeless Management Information System (MSHMIS) – This system details the homeless demographics in Michigan including the problems they face, the resources used, and where current services are falling short.

Quarterly Initiative Status Reports - Reports identifying the current completion stage of the project, including information regarding problems incurred in the delivery of benefits. This information will be shared with the State Executive Management Team at their quarterly meetings.

Eligible Communities:

Eligible Communities must meet all of the following criteria:

- Projects must align with, and support the communities 10-Year Plan to End Homelessness. (Details must be provided on how this initiative furthers the recommendations in your community's 10-Year Plan to End Homelessness.)
- The application package must be approved and signed by the four local key stakeholders, including the Continuum of Care Chairperson, Community Collaborative Chairperson, Community Mental Health Director, and local Department of Human Services Director.
- The community must have identified ONE Interagency Service Team (IST), which meets at least quarterly during the year.
- The community must agree to disseminate best practices and lessons learned within their region and the state.

Eligible Project Applications:

- Eligible project applications must include a Memorandum of Understanding, Timeline, and Budget.
- Must be reviewed at the regional meeting and endorsed by the two regional representatives.
- The lead agency must provide comprehensive homeless services to homeless individuals and/or engage in comprehensive social change to end homelessness as their primary purpose.
- The lead agency must operate its principal place of business within the Region.
- The lead agency must exhibit the capacity to partner with others and administer the program.
- The lead agency must enter client specific data into *Michigan Statewide Homeless Management Information System (MSHMIS)*.

Threshold Requirements and Scoring Criteria:

Application packets must be submitted per instructions. Incomplete packets will not be reviewed.

Criteria for basic eligibility will include:

- Project feasibility.
- Target population identified is either at or below 30 percent AMI OR 100 percent poverty level.
- Identification of project continuation strategy for future years.

Scoring Criteria, points will be awarded based on the following:

- Targeting of the most in need;
- Capacity of Project Lead Agency and partners to provide housing and necessary supportive services.
- Input from consumers.
- The quality of the service commitment and plan with realistic service outcomes (including funding and partnerships for linking services).
- Regional distribution.
- Innovative and replicable project with a strong dissemination plan; and

- Description of how this Housing First model will begin to reduce the cost to shelter and/or motel night stays.

Technical Assistance:

Further questions can be addressed during scheduled Question and Answer Conference Calls

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|--------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| November 5, 2007 | Question and Answer Conference Calls |
| | ➤ 10:00 a.m. |
| | Phone #: 866-840-0048 |
| | Participant Code: 487041# |
| | |
| November 20, 2007 | Question and Answer Conference Calls |
| | ➤ 10:00 a.m. |
| | Phone #: 866-840-0048 |
| | Participant Code: 487041# |
| | |
| December 6, 2007 | Question and Answer Conference Calls |
| | ➤ 10:00 a.m. |
| | Phone #: 866-840-0048 |
| | Participant Code: 487041# |

Questions may be sent to MSHDASupportiveHousing@michigan.gov . Responses to questions will be made available to the individual posing the question and a “Frequently Asked Questions” document and can be found on MSHDA’s website at www.michigan.gov/mshda or the Campaign to End Homelessness website at www.thecampaigntoendhomelessness.org. Information will be updated on a weekly basis. Please refer to the FAQ before submitting your question.

Guidelines for Submission:

- The Addendum must be no more than 15 pages typed (excluding attachments), using 1” margins with a font size of 12.
- The original along with one copy of the signed application and all supporting documents must be received on or before **January 14, 2008 at 5:00 p.m.**
- In addition, each community must email the completed application package to MSHDASupportiveHousing@michigan.gov.

Application packages must be submitted as follow:

- Project Addendum for the initiative with required attachments (Housing First Plan, Memorandum of Understanding, Timeline, and Budget).
- The regional endorsement can be mailed separately, but must arrive at MSHDA no later than January 25, 2008.

**The expected deadline for project implementation is July 1, 2008.*

Faxed or incomplete application packages will not be accepted for processing. All application materials must be received as a package (including the Community Application and all Addendums for which the community is applying). Any materials not received as a package will not be processed.